

Harry Truman lived in the White House has become a favorite of the MTV generation. As one newspaper declared, “Tony Bennett has not just bridged the generation gap, he demolished it.” [Laughter] The vocal style and interpretive skill of Tony Bennett are without equal. And no other singer is held in higher regard by his fellow entertainers. B.B. King once said, “To be near him is a highlight of my life. I’ve met two Presidents in office; I’ve met the Pope, Pavarotti—and Tony Bennett.” [Laughter] Frank Sinatra declared that Tony Bennett was the best singer in his lifetime.

His vocal talent and love for music came from his dad, John Benedetto, who passed away when Tony was 10 years old. In his memoir, Tony writes that John was a “very poetic man, full of love and warmth, who sang with a gentle, sensitive voice I can still hear.” Tony’s mom, Anna, undoubtedly saw those same qualities in her son. He called her, “my one guiding star.” And in a long life, Anna watched her boy rise to the top and remain there.

Tony Bennett is also a very talented painter whose work is widely exhibited and admired. He’s a deeply committed humanitarian. He’s a man of character who served in the U.S. Army in World War II, and he marched for civil rights with Martin Luther King, Jr.

Of his career, Tony Bennett has said, “The audience has been beautiful to me.” And the sentiment is entirely mutual. Everybody likes the man. He’s been aptly described as “the kind of celebrity who cabdrivers call by his first name.” We’re joyful that he remains a friendly presence in American life, an entertainer still at the top of his game, and a voice we love to hear. Tonight our Nation honors Mr. Tony Bennett.

Each of these honorees has enriched our culture and reflected credit on our great country. It’s a true pleasure to be in their company and to let them know just how much they mean to the people of the United States. Congratulations. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. on the State Floor at the White House.

Remarks at the Children’s Holiday Reception

December 5, 2005

The President. Thanks for coming. Welcome. We’re glad you’re here. This is Laura; I’m George W. [Laughter] We hope you’ve had some fun here. I hope nobody pinched Rudolph on the nose. [Laughter] No, nobody did. That’s good—Rudolph is happy about that too. [Laughter]

We welcome the students from Stratford Landing Elementary School in Alexandria and Glen Haven Elementary School in Silver Spring. We’re glad you all are here. We want to welcome your teachers and your parents. Thanks for coming. We’re glad you’re at the White House.

I particularly want to welcome those of you here who have got a mom or dad serving our country in the United States military. I know it’s hard when they’re away; this has got to be a difficult time for you. But we really want you to know that they’re doing important work. They’re not only protecting the country, but they’re helping other boys and girls live in freedom like we do here in the United States, and that’s important. So one message I want to give you is, we’re really proud of your mom or dad, and you tell them thanks—thanks on behalf of a grateful nation.

And now I get to introduce somebody I’m grateful for, and that’s the First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. on the State Floor at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks on the National Economy in Kernersville, North Carolina

December 5, 2005

Thanks for having me. Thanks for letting me come by to John Deere-Hitachi. I’m here to talk about our economy. No better place to talk about our economy, in a place where people are working hard and where they’re productive, where they’re making a product people want. The economy of the United